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Washington, DC – On Wednesday, Rep. Steve Israel (D – N.Y.) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) announced that the 2.1 million-member SEIU endorsed the Household Product Labeling Act (H.R.3057). Rep. Israel's legislation requires manufacturers of basic household cleaning products – like tile cleaner and dish soap – to list the product ingredients on the product or its packaging.

“Like big tobacco, the big chemical industry in American has gotten away with too much for too long. They’ve deprived us of basic information about the chemicals being used in our homes and workplaces, some of which are downright dangerous. The people who are the most at risk are the ones who spend all day with these chemicals at work and we can’t let big chemical take advantage of them anymore,” said Rep. Israel. “My bill will require companies to come clean and finally provide the information necessary to make smart decisions about cleaning products and protect the men and women SEIU represents from hazards lurking in the workplace.”

“If we have the right to know about the potential side effects of our prescription drugs, we have the right to know what’s in our chemical cleaning supplies. As millions of concerned parents and tens of thousands of SEIU janitors, service workers, home care providers and others can tell you, finding a cleaning product that is effective but safe is almost a mission impossible. You either need a chemical engineering degree or blind trust that many products on the market today won’t harm your toddler, pet or yourself. And with flu season upon us we should not put families in a position to have to choose between a deadly virus and a deadly cleaning product,” said SEIU Secretary-Treasurer Anna Burger, “Congressman Israel’s bill will finally give both parents and professionals the chance to know a complete and accurate list of the product’s ingredients and any potential health impact keeping clean keeps us healthy. It should enjoy broad bipartisan support.”

According to a recent study by the Center for the New American Dream, the institutional cleaning industry uses an estimated five billion pounds of chemicals annually in the United States. Current federal law does not require companies to list ingredients for household products including cleaning agents, pesticides, epoxy, paint and stains. Only ingredients that pose an immediate threat must be included on the label. Rep. Israel’s bill requires a full ingredient list on the product or its packaging.

A study released this month by Environmental Working Group tested more than 20 chemicals used in California schools and found 457 air contaminants that are putting children at risk for

asthma and other possible health issues.

A 2007 report by Women's Voices for the Earth details the health problems caused by chemicals commonly found in home cleaning agents:

- Monoethanolamine (MEA) is a surfactant found in some laundry detergents, all-purpose cleaners and floor cleaners and is a known inducer of occupational asthma.
- Ammonium quaternary compounds are disinfectants found in some disinfectant sprays and toilet cleaners that have been identified as inducers of occupational asthma.
- Glycol ethers, such as 2-butoxyethanol, are solvents commonly found in glass cleaners and all-purpose spray cleaners that have been linked to reduced fertility and low birth weight in exposed mice.
- Alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs) are surfactants found in laundry detergents, stain removers, and all-purpose cleaners, which have been found to reduce embryo survival in fish, and alter tadpole development. APEs are commonly detected as contaminants in rivers and streams – including in the Long Island Sound, and have also been found in household dust.
- Phthalates are carriers for fragrance in glass cleaners, deodorizers, laundry detergents and fabric softeners, which have been linked to adverse effects on male children, reduced sperm count in adult men, and increased allergic symptoms and asthma in children.

Rep. Israel's bill is endorsed by: Audubon Society, Environmental Working Group, Cancer Prevention Coalition, Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Healthy Child Healthy World, Toxics Information Project, OMB Watch, Public Citizen, Oregon Toxics Alliance, Oregon Center for Environmental Health, Method, SEIU, Seventh Generation, Teens Turning Green, Maid Brigade, Breast Cancer Action and Association of Reproductive Health Professionals.

Senator Al Franken (D-Minn.) has introduced companion legislation the Senate (S.1697).

Rep. Israel serves on the House Appropriations Committee.